

YMCA School's Out Program

by Stephanie Beaver

The *Ellenville YMCA School's Out Program* operated a very successful six-week summer program this year. Each week represented a particular theme that included the week's recreation, arts & crafts, and educational activities.

For Family/Community/Country Week, the children centered on themselves, their family, the YMCA community, the village of Ellenville, the state of NY, and then our country. This week introduced community service to the children as well, and initiated a summer long, daily playground clean up. At the end of the week, the collected litter was used to create an anti-littering art collage. Children were also treated to a visit from Officer Young of the *Ellenville Police Department* and learned about safety and the importance of rules.

Animals and Nature Week featured scientific experiments designed to teach children about the role of the sun and how it affects plants and animals. Children also participated on a field trip to *Kelder's Farm*, learned all about bugs and created a variety of creepy, crawly arts & crafts.

Art and Music Week was one of the most enjoyable as the children studied about great artists, created a self portrait, learned about all different kinds of music, made their own musical instruments and created a hand painted quilt with each child contributing their own unique self expression. Also, the children were treated to a live concert by the local band, *Orpheus*. Band members Scott Gentry, Nick Torres, and Kevin Eighmey treated the children to a great concert.

Ice Cream Week was definitely the tastiest with children learning all about ice cream. Children made their own ice cream and were treated to making their own sundaes courtesy of a generous donation from *Gillette Creamery*. Children also participated in the Dreyers Ice Cream Contest by creating brand new flavors of ice cream! And, of course sampling just a bit of ice cream themselves!

Water! Water! Water! Week was a real splash with the children. They learned all about the water table, the ocean and the importance of water in our eco-system. Extra pool time was planned, as well as a Water Carnival featuring water balloons, sponge relays, fishing relays, and a variety of other games. Of course, watermelon was had by all.

The summer program ended with Celebrations Week. A featured celebration was Mardi Gras where children made beaded necklaces, masks, and had a very flashy parade. Birthdays were also included in the celebrating with cake and ice cream for all as well as a barbecue at nearby **Lippman Park**.

The program included breakfast and lunch each day, swimming at least twice a day, bingo with prizes each Friday, and the creation of a yearbook for each child. In addition, the children maintained the YMCA flower garden planted during our Before and After School Program this spring. Garden helpers were chosen each day and chores and changes in the garden were logged in a Garden Almanac. We are now making plans to expand the garden this fall. Other highlights included a weekly visit from Cornell Cooperative extension for "Fun with Food," where the children learned about nutrition and prepared a healthy snack each week and participating in the NYS Assembly Summer Reading Challenge by reading for 15 minutes each day.



Pablo Shine, above, with John, Nicholas, and Ben with the fun and healthy snack made themselves. Mr. Shine is from Cornell Cooperative Extension and visited each week, taught the children about good nutrition and made a healthy snack with them. Below, Mardi Gras Parade.

Many thanks to all who participated and supported the program this summer. Special thanks to all the staff and Ernest Bollin, Chris Karczmar and the 21st Century Learning Centers, *Country Flowers*, *Gillette Creamery*, Gail Kristoff, Holly Eikszta, Lisa Wiles, Elliott Auerbach, and all at the Village of Ellenville for their support! Also special thanks to Jack Young and Bill Doughman for their continued support of this much needed program!

The program was a great success with parents, children, and staff all enjoying the many activities. We are now making plans to expand the program next year. We are also currently enrolling children in our Before and After School Program.





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